

To: VDCI

From: N10/SP

The Soviets have had a near-monopoly on strategic defenses for many years. While the United States, following the signing of the ABM Treaty in 1972, had a low priority on strategic defenses such as ABM, air defense, and civil defense, the Soviets have continued to spend as much on strategic defense as they do on offensive weapons such as ICBMs. They see strategic defense as an integral part of their nuclear strategy.

The Soviets have publicly stressed that they seek only parity in strategic offensive forces, and they rarely mention their strategic defenses in discussions with Westerners of the strategic balance. One should always be wary of the implications of Soviet military efforts that they tend to downplay in dealing with the West. In the Soviets' evaluation, they have a distinct advantage from their strategic defense monopoly, despite their recent claims, while attacking the US SDI program, that the possibility of defending against ballistic missiles is a useless endeavor, and that strategic defense is foolishness. Their enormous investments in current and future strategic defense of all kinds belie their propaganda claims.

The Soviets would see themselves as retaining a distinct advantage by preserving their monopoly on strategic defense, ^{US} and the result of the United States choosing to give up on defenses and rely solely on offensive weapons for deterrence. They would see the US abandonment of the concept of strategic defense, after initially embracing it in March 1983 in the President's SDI speech, as a key indicator of the loss of US will to compete militarily with the Soviets. They have seen the SDI program, the changes in our strategic policy beginning

with President Carter's PD59 in 1980, and the US military strengthening in the last several years as an indication of a United States willing to counter Soviet efforts and strategy with military muscle. We have shown a sense of purpose that they take seriously, because it emphasizes areas such as strategic defense that they consider necessary to a serious military posture. I believe they would find it incredible, but welcome, for us to now abandon strategic defense, and, along with other trends, revert to what they would consider a less serious approach to military affairs. ~~But~~, putting us back into a more complacent mood, abandoning SDI, is a key objective of their current policy, and they would welcome our complacency as providing their comfortable breathing space and a less competitive environment in which to further augment their military power to gain useful advantage over the West.